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General Studies-2

Swachh Nyayalaya Project:

Why in News?

A ₹700-crore project to have clean courts, right from the Supreme Court, High courts to the 3,388 lower courts, has been proposed.

About the Project:

- The project, which is ostensibly on the lines of the Centre's flagship scheme Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, would be undertaken by NITI Aayog and the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation along with the justice department.
- In a pre-launch function of the *Swachh Nyayalaya* project at the apex court on Friday, Supreme Court judge, Justice Madan B. Lokur said besides construction and maintenance of washrooms in over 16,000 court rooms, a mechanism needs to be devised to deal with garbage and also to weed out old case files.
- The project would be inaugurated on the occasion of Law Day on November 26 by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi.

Need of the Project:

- The idea behind this *Swachh Nyayalaya* is to have those general clean up in terms of maintenance, in terms of house keeping issues, of course, providing toilets, washrooms and all that is one of the aspects of housekeeping and maintenance but equally important are issues of garbage disposal," Justice Lokur said.
- He stressed the need to take up the project in "broad perspective" and said it should not remain confined to toilets and washrooms only.
- He then gave the example of the apex court and said that by weeding out old and unnecessary files, a large bar room has been made here.

Electoral Bond Scheme 2018

Government of India has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification No. 20 dated 02nd January 2018.

What is it?

- An electoral bond is designed to be a bearer instrument like a Promissory Note — in effect, it will be similar to a bank note that is payable to the bearer on demand and free of interest.
- The bonds will be issued in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore and will be available at specified branches of State Bank of India.

Who can Purchase?

- As per provisions of the Scheme, Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person (as defined in item No.2(d) of Gazette Notification), who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- A person being an individual can buy Electoral Bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals.

Eligibility criterion for Political Parties:

- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.

Other Deals about the Bond:

- State Bank of India (SBI) in the 6th phase of sale, has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 29 Authorised Branches.
- Electoral Bonds shall be valid for **fifteen calendar days** from the date of issue and no payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.

- The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day.

Swachh Bharat Sustainable Sanitation Workshops

Why in News?

The series of sustainability regional workshops which will take place across the country have been scheduled within the next month to cover all States and Union Territories. Current locations include Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Nainital (Uttarakhand), Guwahati (Assam) and Kolkata (West Bengal).

Focus Areas:

- Quality and sustainability are a parallel focus in the Swachh Bharat Mission implementation mechanism, especially now that a majority of districts across the country have achieved Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.
- Aimed at a more focused drive on the theme of sustainability, and improving quality of, the work done on the ground, the review meeting covered a range of quality and sustainability indicators in order to improve infrastructure and data quality and to improve communication for quality initiatives.
- Swachh Bharat Mission enters its fifth and final year of implementation, this year is a clear milestone for the janandolan to move ahead with a new target to ensure the cleanliness of the country.

Success of SBM:

- As of October 2018, rural sanitation coverage has increased from 39%, at the launch of the SBM in 2014, to 95%.
- With rural India having constructed 8.7 crore individual household toilets, 5.15 lakh villages, 530 districts and 25 States and Union Territories have been declared ODF.

Multidimensional Poverty Index

While overall [poverty](#) in India has come down in 2016 compared to 2006, the progress has been uneven among States and communities.

A look at the Multidimensional [Poverty](#) Index (MPI), calculated by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and UNDP reveal the variations.

What is Multidimensional Poverty Index?

- MPI is a measure that takes into account the incidence of poverty and the extent of deprivation. Going beyond just monetary measures, the MPI takes into account several factors. Here's a look at the various indicators involved and their weightage:

How is MPI calculated?

- Assets Housing Electricity Water* Sanitation Fuel* School attendance Years of schooling Child mortality Nutrition Weight 1/18 each Weight 1/6 each Living standards Education Health

**Water refers to drinking water and fuel refers to cooking fuel*

- The calculation boils down to a value between 0 and 1. An MPI value of 1 indicates the highest deprivation level, while 0 indicates the lowest.

Global comparison

- India's MPI is lower than the global average of 0.159 and the South Asian countries, but is higher (worse) than BRICS countries (excluding Russia).
- The MPI has been calculated for 105 developing economies.

State & district comparison

- India's MPI stood at 0.121 in 2016, half of what it was in 2006.
- Among districts, Alirajpur (0.402) and Jhabua (0.393) districts in Madhya Pradesh and Shrawasti (0.393) in Uttar Pradesh had the highest MPI.
- The worst 10 districts were in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- The lowest MPI was in Kottayam district, Kerala -- where the MPI stood at 0, indicating no deprivation.
- Thrissur and Ernakulam districts in Kerala had a marginal MPI of 0.001. In fact, the 10 districts with the lowest MPI were all in Kerala, except for

Chennai in Mahe in Puducherry (0.001) and Chennai district in Tamil Nadu (0.05).

Variation across communities

The MPI has gone down across communities, but it is more than double among Scheduled Tribes compared to Others.

General Studies-3

U.S.- India Trade Dispute:

Why in News?

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) dispute settlement body has set up a panel to examine the U.S. complaint against certain export-subsidy measures by India as both the sides failed to resolve the issue at consultation level

Background:

- In March, the U.S. dragged India to the global trade body's dispute settlement mechanism over export subsidies, saying that these incentives were harming the American companies.
- Seeking consultation under the aegis of the WTO is the first step of dispute settlement process.
- If the two nations are not able to reach a mutually agreed solution through consultation, the complainant can request for a WTO dispute settlement panel to review the matter.

US Allegations:

- The U.S. has requested for the establishment of a dispute panel to examine the allegations on India's export incentive measures.
- The U.S. has challenged India's export subsidy programmes such as Merchandise Exports from India Scheme in the WTO, asserting that these initiatives harm its companies by creating an uneven playing field.
- They have stated that all WTO members, including India, are required to provide subsidies consistent with provisions of the WTO's Agreement on

Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, including refraining from providing subsidies contingent upon export performance.

- During the consultation process, the U.S. had alleged that India was continuing to grant these export-contingent subsidies and even expanded the scope and scale of the subsidies.

India's Stand on Issue:

- India had stated that it was disappointed that the U.S. chose to move forward with a request for a panel, as it believed bilateral consultations held on April 11 were constructive.
- During the consultations, India provided a detailed understanding of the schemes implemented under its Foreign Trade Policy by answering all the questions raised by the U.S.
- India has also said that the schemes identified by the U.S. do not violate India's WTO obligations and are in conformity with all the elements of the agreement.

India's exports to the U.S. stood at \$47.9 billion in 2017-18, while imports aggregated at \$26.7 billion during the same fiscal.

New Species found in Western Ghats

Details of Findings:

The spot-necked day gecko and the Anaimudi day gecko, both very distinctly-patterned lizards found only in the higher reaches of the Agasthyamalai and Anamalai hill ranges in the Western Ghats, are the latest additions to India's reptile fauna.

Red iris

The approximately six-centimetre-long lizard sported an unusual, bright red iris (a thin band surrounding the pupil of the eye) and a long, striking amber line also ran down its dark back: unlike anything the team had seen.

Spot-necked day gecko

- Another day gecko was spotted at Kollam's Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary – which is part of the Agasthyamalai hill range – in 2016.

- This gecko had bluish-white spots in a distinct 'necklace-pattern' on its nape.

Observations of finding team:

- Both these diurnal geckos are currently known only from single localities in high-elevation forests located at more than 1,200 metres above mean sea level in the Ghats.
- There is a possibility that these day geckos could be present in the surrounding hills but more detailed surveys would be required to confirm this, said Cyriac.
- While mountain ranges in general have a rather high diversity of such day geckos, the "accelerated environmental decline" that these regions face are a concern.

Tiger Population Dwindling:

Background:

- Six different sub-species of tigers exist today, scientists confirmed on October 25, amid hopes the findings will boost efforts to save the fewer than 4,000 free-range big cats that remain in the world.
- The six include the Bengal tiger, Amur tiger, South China tiger, Sumatran tiger, Indochinese tiger and Malayan tiger.
- Three other tiger subspecies have already gone extinct: the Caspian, Javan and Bali tigers.

Key threats to tigers' survival:

Habitat loss and poaching.

Issues in Conservation:

- How to best conserve the species and encourage both captive and wild breeding has been a matter of debate among scientists, in part because of divisions over how many tiger sub-species exist.

- "The lack of consensus over the number of tiger subspecies has partially hindered the global effort to recover the species from the brink of extinction.

Genomic study

- Researchers analyzed the complete genomes of 32 tiger specimens in order to confirm they fall into six genetically distinct groups.
- Although tigers are believed to have roamed the Earth for the past two to three million years, the current population traces back to about 110,000 years ago, "when tigers suffered a historic population bottleneck."
- Researchers found very little evidence of breeding among different tiger populations.
- This low genetic diversity indicates that each subspecies has a unique evolutionary history.
- It also sets tigers apart from other big cats like jaguars, which more commonly intermix across entire continents.
- Tigers are not all alike.
- Tigers from [Russia](#) are evolutionarily distinct from those from India. Even tigers from Malaysia and Indonesia are different."
- Reversing the decline of tigers means "maximizing the efforts to preserve the genetic diversity, evolutionary uniqueness, and potential of the species *Panthera tigris*."